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ABSTRACT

During the period from September 1967 through June 1969, a total of 23 classroom teachers served internships in a Title III-funded Regional Learning Disabilities Center. The instructional cycles were of 11-weeks duration, and each teacher tutored 15 children each cycle. The internship training consisted of tutoring individually and in small groups, conferring with other clinic personnel on individual cases, preparing diagnostic case studies and detailed progress reports, and administering a variety of informal and standardized testing instruments. Case conferences, seminars, and 15 inservice colloquia also contributed to staff development. Student and parent interest in the center activities were highly positive. Following the internship training, most of the 23 interns assumed positions as reading specialists with the sponsoring school district. (CM)

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PREPARING CLASSROOM TEACHERS TO WORK WITH SEVERELY UNDERACHIEVING PUPILS THROUGH AN INTERNSHIP IN A REGIONAL LEARNING DISABILITY CENTER

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Fourth Annual Statewide Reading Conference, sponsored by New York State Reading Council and the Bureau of Reading of the New York State Education Department, Grossinger, N.Y.
April 8 - 10, 1970

The general theme of this conference is "Reading Assessment: Why, What, Who." I consider reading assessment an extremely important aspect of the teaching of reading, and I plan to present some of the diagnostic and assessment techniques which were utilized at the Learning Center in Binghamton.

My talk today centers around the preparation of classroom teachers to work with severely underachieving pupils. The setting was the Learning Disability Center, although the name was later changed to Learning Center, to emphasize the positive aspect of our work. The program was funded by some twenty public and private school districts in Broome and part of Tioga Counties on the Southern Tier of New York State, and sponsored by the USOE under provisions of Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. The objectives of the program included: 1) the identification and evaluation of severely underachieving pupils, primarily those with disability in reading and related skills; 2) the development of a tutorial program for these pupils; 3) the training of school district personnel who might later provide similar diagnostic and tutorial services in each of the cooperating school districts; 4) the presentation of in-service staff development programs for teachers in the various school

districts, and 5) the consummation of evaluative and research projects relevant to each of the aforementioned objectives.

The Learning Center was funded for a three-year period, from June 1, 1966 through September 30, 1969, and was actually operational during the latter two years. The target student population was drawn from fifteen of the twenty cooperating school districts, although these fifteen districts enrolled 88% of the total pupil population in kindergarten through grade 12 in the twenty school districts.

Each of the participating districts appointed a representative through whom communications were processed. Criteria for referral of students included the following: 1) academic disability (essentially in reading and related skills) of at least one year in grades 1 and 2, and two years in grades 3 and above; 2) intellectual assessment within the normal range; 3) ineligibility for participation in special classes for the retarded, emotionally distrubed, or perceptually handicapped, and 4) absence of gross physical or sensory defects. A variety of diagnostic and descriptive labels have been applied to the target population, including "congenital word blindness," "communication disorders," and "specific language disability." Who could resist the trend, and we ourselves on various occasions referred to the

condition as "dyslexia." A more complete description of the intake process and the characteristics of the target population appears in a monograph issued by the International Reading Association (1) and in several listings of Research in Education (ERIC) (2,3,4).

Approximately 200 pupils were enrolled during each of the two years when the program was operational. As one may suspect, some 90% of the pupils were boys. The modal grade placement of the 1968-69 enrollment group was 5th. The mean age at the time of enrollment was 11-1. The mean Basal Reader Instructional Level at the initial evaluation was 2.3. Thus, the typical student was underachieving approximately three years with respect to present grade level. However, since 85% of the group had repeated at least one grade, the degree of retardation was even more pronounced in comparison to age norms. The pupils came from sixty-six different schools. They were drawn from fifteen school districts whose combined pupil population was just under 60,000.

Internship Program

During the period from September, 1967 through June, 1969 a total of twenty-three teachers served internships ranging from one-half year to two years. Twelve of the twenty-three teachers were regularly employed by the

different school districts which sponsored the project, and they volunteered for assignment to the Learning Center on a temporary basis. The salaries and related costs of these teachers were reimbursed by the Center. The remaining number of teachers were employed directly by the Center.

The characteristics of the instructional staff are delineated in tables in Appendix I of this report. The majority of the teachers had permanent New York State certification, mostly for teaching in the elementary schools. The majority had acquired the Master's degree or its equivalent in Reading, Educational Psychology, or some related area. The mean age of the staff for both years was thirty, and the mean number of years of prior teaching experience was six and one-half. Approximately 50% of the staff were males, which reflected the intense recruiting efforts of the director to obtain personnel who would be most compatible with the target population.

The typical day for teachers at the Learning Center consisted of five hourly periods, during which tutorial instruction was applied to children either in groups of two or three, or individually. During each of the two years, approximately 25% of the pupils received individual instruction, 60% received instruction in groups of two, and 10% in groups of three. Obviously, the cardinal emphasis throughout the project was the individualization

of instruction. Tuesday mornings were reserved for case conferences during which the Center teacher, staff psychologist, social worker, and medical specialist reviewed the diagnostic study and reported on the educational progress of the pupil. The regular classroom teacher and the school district psychologist or principal frequently attended the case conferences to provide some coordination of instructional effort.

Pupils attended the Learning Center for an hourly session on two alternate days of the week. Each session consisted of about fifty minutes of instruction in reading and related skills (although some pupils attended for disability in arithmetic) and ten minutes in the activity room where various crafts and games were introduced. The activity room provided creative outlets for the children and was an extremely popular aspect of the total program.

Each teacher was responsible for approximately fifteen pupils during each of the three instructional cycles. The instructional cycles were usually of eleven weeks duration and the terminal dates coincided with the Winter and Spring recesses. At the close of each cycle detailed progress reports were developed for transmission to the local school districts. Pupils who had progressed close to or at grade level in the pertinent academic skill were discontinued from the program at this time, while new pupils were added. During the 1967-68 academic year, 6,603 instructional hours were provided for 202 pupils. The comparable figures for

the second year were 7,704 hours for 172 pupils. However, almost 50% of the pupils who received some instruction in the first year continued into the second year. Twenty-one pupils were enrolled in all six cycles which comprised the two year period. (See Appendix II for additional summary data.)

Clinical Activity

It was the responsibility of each teacher to provide a thorough diagnostic study of each pupil prior to inclusion in the tutorial program. Special time periods and frequent meetings with the director, staff psychologist, and social worker were provided to assist the teacher in the development of the diagnostic study, a copy of which was forwarded to the home school district. The diagnostic package included a full array of informal instruments, standardized achievement tests (usually from the Metropolitan battery) at the appropriate level of difficulty, sensory screening tests (Bausch and Lomb's School Vision Tester and Eckstein Bros.' Tritone Audiometer), interest inventories, and questionnaire-type projective tests.

The informal testing instruments were particularly valuable in the evaluation of the pupils, since specific skills deficiencies could be readily identified. The informal instruments included the following: Sample Graded Word List; Word Identification Survey; Word Analysis Record; Informal Spelling Inventory; Alphabet Recognition Survey;

Informal Reading Inventory; Writing Sample and Spelling Sample. These instruments were refined during the course of the project, and several were granted copyrights after they were placed in printed form. It is anticipated that in the near future these tests will be available for perusual through the ERIC system of document retrieval. Incidentally, a variety of educational settings, including school districts and clinics, are now using these instruments as part of their assessment process.

In almost all instances, psychological reports and detailed reports of social service interviews were made available to the teachers. Reports from the consulting neurologist, psychiatrist, ophthalmologist and pediatrician were also available when such evaluations were deemed necessary. The teacher utilized this background information to develop the diagnostic report and plan instructional strategies.

During periods of research activity the Center teacher administered a variety of specialized instruments including a test of lateral preference, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test, the Winterhaven Perceptual Copy Forms, Frostig's Developmental Test of Visual Perception, Wepman's Auditory Discrimination Test, and Myklebust's Picture Story Language Test.

At the conclusion of each instructional cylce comparable informal and standardized tests were applied and the results

reported in Progress Reports which were transmitted to the home school district. As part of the research effort of the program each child responded to a Pupil Attitude Survey and each parent completed a Parent Response Sheet. Both of these instruments attempted to ascertain the general reaction of pupils and parents to various aspects of the instructional program. In addition, the teachers were provided with invaluable feedback about the impact of their instructional procedures and other matters. Parental conferences were held at the time of the development of the Progress Report.

Staff Development

The Learning Center maintained a rather extensive library of professional books and journals for distribution to personnel in the cooperating school districts. The Center teachers were encouraged to utilize the library in connection with their clinical activity. The resource material in the library became a vital ingredient in the professional development of the staff.

Case conferences and seminars were attended by the staff on a regular basis. The Center teachers were encouraged to present difficult cases for group discussion and clarification. The classroom teacher, school district psychologist, principal, and social worker, and the consulting medical specialists attended the case conferences on various occasions. Seminars were arranged to discuss some theoretical issue in the teaching of reading, to

introduce a possible assessment instrument, and to clarify research objectives.

The Center teachers participated in an In-Service Colloquia which was organized for sixty-five school personnel from the cooperating districts. The colloquia consisted of fifteen two-hour sessions, and guest speakers included such well-known individuals as Frederick B. Davis (University of Pennsylvania), Marvin D. Glock (Cornell University), William D. Sheldon (Syracuse University), and Donald D. Durrell (Boston University). Albert J. Harris (City University of New York) was both a guest speaker and general consultant for the project. In addition to the regular participants, large numbers of teachers and administrators from local and distant school districts attended the sessions on numerous occasions. The topical outline developed for the colloquia is included in Appendix III.

The Center teachers assisted the director in the development of the In-Service Colloquia. They met with the participants in small groups to explain the use of informal tests. On various occasions they demonstrated a variety of diagnostic and tutorial techniques which were applied at the Learning Center. The splendid cooperation of the staff reinforced the conviction of the director that a clinical internship can transform a teacher-in-training from a passive observer to a powerful innovator.

The staff became fully involved in the research efforts of the project, and the discussion of research strategies provided a meaningful approach to staff development. An enormous amount of data for each year of the project has already been processed and is beginning to appear in the literature. A widely used text on the teaching of reading has reported the results of a study on the identification of contributing factors, as assessed by the staff of the Center (5). Each teacher was asked to identify for each pupil at the time of termination from the program those factors which appeared to contribute to the disability with varying degrees of intensity. Other research endeavors which involved the staff are presently being processed. Kent State University has generously granted this reporter a 1970-71 Academic Year Fellowship to assist in the development and dissemination of additional research data.

Conclusion

The success of the internship program was ascertained by the reaction of the pupils, the parents, personnel in the cooperating school districts, and the interns themselves. During the period of the project approximately 300 pupils were enrolled in the tutorial program for varying amounts of time. Of this number, fewer than five elected to discontinue instruction because of lack of interest. A questionnaire was distributed to the classroom teachers of

the pupils in attendance in connection with program evaluation. In response to the question, "Does the pupil seem to want to continue instruction at the Center?", the following results were recorded:

	N	%
Yes	105	89.8
Undecided	10	8.5
No	2	1.7
	117	100.0

This data was obtained for the 1967-68 school year, and the same trend was observed for the 1968-69 year.

Questionnaires distributed to parents of pupils enrolled in the program indicated a remarkably positive reaction. Noticeable improvements were reported by parents in many aspects of behavior, including interest in school, personal and social adjustment, and academic skills. The following comments were made by parents of pupils enrolled during either or both of the years of the project:

"There has been a complete change in our son's attitude toward his school work and also toward his own confidence."

"I would recommend this program for children with reading problems. My son was approximately one year behind his class. The individual training given in this program has prepared him academically in his proper grade. It has also changed his personality. He is so much more confident because he knows how to read and what he is reading. I would like to see other children helped through this same special program because reading and comprehension are important aspects in our daily lives."

"Lawrence only existed in the classroom from second through sixth grade. Before reading help he hated school and teachers because of pressure to pass grades when he couldn't read to learn. Since reading help he is happy going to school and takes interest to study more if marks are low. At home now he will pick a book up and even discuss homework with parents."

"We feel that if it weren't for this program our child would never have progressed as fast as she has in such a short time. The Center was equipped to help us with every aspect of her problem, and to give us the guidance we needed to help her."

Upon termination of the project in June, 1969, most of the twenty-three interns assumed positions as reading specialists with the sponsoring school districts. Two interns became learning disability specialists in a regional school district in Maryland. Similar positions were assumed by interns in the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. One intern became a Study Skills Counselor at Ohio State University, and another became a Classroom Supervising Teacher with Connecticut State College.

The mission of Title III projects was to provide innovative approaches to significant educational goals. The Learning Center, in cooperation with the sponsoring school districts, provided unique services to pupils with severe academic disabilities. In addition, classroom teachers with varying degrees of experience and training were provided with the opportunity to develop diagnostic and tutorial skills for use with these pupils. The U.S.

Office of Education has set as a priority for the decade of the 70's the right of all pupils to read to the full limits of their capability. The Learning Center has provided an effective model towards achieving this goal, particularly for geographical areas which do not have convenient access to university or hospital based reading centers.

Appendix I

Data on Instructional Staff
1967-1969

I. Certification

Status	1967-1968 N	1967-1968 %	1968-1969 N	1968-1969 %
Permanent N.Y.	7	53.8	7	70.0
Temporary N.Y.	2	15.4	1	10.0
Other State	2	15.4	1	10.0
None	2	15.4	1	10.0
Total	13	100.0	10	100.0

II. Highest Educational Level

Level	1967-1968 N	1967-1968 %	1968-1969 N	1968-1969 %
BA/BS	1	7.7	4	40.0
BA + 15	4	30.8	1	10.0
BA + 30/MA	6	46.1	5	50.0
MA + 15/BA + 60	2	15.4	0	0.0
Total	13	100.0	10	100.0

III. Area of Professional Training

Area	1967-1968 N	1967-1968 %	1968-1969 N	1968-1969 %
Reading, Psychology, or Related Area	8	61.5	6	60.0
Other	5	38.5	4	40.0
Total	13	100.0	10	100.0

IV. Years of Previous Full-Time Teaching Experience

	N	Mean	S.D.	Minimum	Maximum
1967-1968	13	6.9	7.5	2	30
1968-1969	10	6.1	7.7	0	27

V. Age at Commencement of Employment at the Learning Center

	N	Mean Yrs. Mos.	S.D.(Yrs.)	Min. Age	Max. Age
1967-1968	13	31-4	9.8	23-10	59-2
1968-1969	10	29-10	8.8	23-0	52-2

VI. Duration of Teaching Experience at the Learning Center

	1967-1968 N	1967-1968 %	1968-1969 N	1968-1969 %
1/2 Year	7	53.1	0	
1 Full Year	6	46.1	8	80.0
1 1/2 Years	0	0.0	1	10.0
2 Full Years	0	0.0	1	10.0
Total	13	100.0	10	100.0

VII. Distribution by Sex

	1967-1968 N	1967-1968 %	1968-1969 N	1968-1969 %
Female	7	54.0	5	50.0
Male	6	46.0	5	50.0
Total	13	100.0	10	100.0

Appendix II

Tutorial Services Summary Data
September, 1967 - June, 1969

I. Pupils Enrolled for Individual or Small Group Instruction

	1967-68	1968-69[1]
Total Number of Pupils	202	174
Boys	177	154
Girls	25	20
Total Number of Instructional Hours	6,603	7,774
Pupils Drawn From		
Total Number of School Districts	14	15
Total Number of Different Schools	65	66

II. Pupils Who Attended for Diagnostic Sessions Only

	1967-68	1968-69
Complete Diagnostic Evaluations	65	85
Screening Evaluations	90	130

[1]Includes 88 pupils who attended at least 15 sessions in 1967-68 and who continued into the instructional program of 1968-69.

Appendix III

Topical Outline of the In-Service Colloquia

"Diagnostic and Remedial Techniques in the Improvement of Reading"

1. Overview of Sequential Skills in the Teaching of Reading
2. Causative Factors in Reading and Language Arts Disability
3. Informal Approaches to Evaluation of Reading and Language Arts Skills
4. Use of Standardized Tests in Evaluation of Reading Skills
5. Contributions of Psychological Assessment to the Improvement of Reading
6. Individualizing Instruction in the Classroom
7. Learning Theory and the Teaching of Reading
8. Application of Remedial Techniques in the Classroom Setting
9. Materials and Equipment for the Improvement of Reading
10. Developing Word Identification Skills
11. Developing Comprehension, Study Skills, and Rate of Reading
12. Identification and Treatment of Pupils with Specific Language Disability (Dyslexia)
13. Improvement of Reading Skills of Secondary School Pupils
14. Innovative Instructional Programs
15. Contributions of Current Research to the Teaching of Reading